

Minutes of the Special Meeting (Study Session) of March 29, 2011
One Twin Pines Lane, City Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER 7:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Feierbach, Warden, Lieberman, Wozniak, Braunstein

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT: None

Staff Present: City Manager Scoles, Interim City Attorney Kane, Community Development Director de Melo, City Treasurer Violet, Deputy City Clerk Cook

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Councilmember Warden.

Review of the Belmont “Village Districts” Zoning Amendments Project

Community Development Director de Melo stated that this matter was last reviewed by the City Council in November of 2009. He clarified that the important issue is the conceptual plan, not the details of the wording of the document. He explained that economic development strategy sites have been identified, and that defining the Village zoning within the downtown corridor is part of the overall General Plan Update.

Community Development Director de Melo stated that design is important in the goal to provide services within Belmont. He outlined the tour of developments in other cities that was undertaken as part of the strategy to refine and redevelop the downtown corridor. He described the review of this matter that was made by the Planning Commission. He noted that the zoning component of this endeavor was placed on hold in order to address the Housing Element and the Sign Ordinance, both of which have now been completed.

Community Development Director de Melo provided an overview of the proposed zoning districts, including the new Village zoning designation. He described the pedestrian connectivity that would be provided.

Discussion ensued regarding the potential creation of a plaza on Emmett Street. Community Development Director de Melo stated that the adjacent commercial property owners have expressed support for the concept, but want continued access to their properties.

Community Development Director de Melo described residential uses in the downtown area and where they are proposed to be allowed. He noted that the new zoning document cleans up and updates language regarding use by right, conditional uses, limited uses, and prohibited uses. He also outlined residential standards and allowable floor area, and described the exception process. He explained that an exception would require a finding of public benefit.

Community Development Director de Melo described building height standards, setbacks, and

parking and landscape requirements. He provided examples of the application of the proposed development standards to existing sites. He outlined the design criteria and described the public open space, management plans and nuisance standards.

Kristin Mercer, Planning Commissioner, expressed her general support for this plan. She expressed her desire to allow for greater density, and noted there are some inconsistencies and arbitrariness in the document. There is a need for more distinction between zones, and she noted the plan is silent on traffic flow and parking. She recommended clear and concise direction regarding the vision, not the detail. She expressed her desire to complete this document so that when the economy recovers, it is ready to be implemented. She recommended including sustainability as a goal in this process.

Gladwyn D'Souza, Belmont resident, described how the City of Redwood City approaches pedestrian access in development. He noted that the proposed public spaces in the Village area are small or enclosed. He expressed a need for pedestrian connectivity in the core along Ralston Avenue.

Mary Morrissey-Parden, Belmont Chamber of Commerce, suggested implementing a Business Improvement District to assist with improvements in the downtown. She noted this should occur early on in the process.

In response to Council comments and questions, Community Development Director de Melo stated that the Caltrain corridor presents a physical challenge for east-west pedestrian access. He stated that any proposal to narrow Ralston Avenue east of El Camino Real is a policy matter for the City Council to determine.

Councilmember Wozniak stated that additional pedestrian undercrossings could be accomplished along the rail corridor.

Mayor Feierbach expressed concern regarding the impact of additional housing on school capacity.

John Violet, City Treasurer, noted that school impact fees can be used to offset costs to the district for additional students.

Councilmember Wozniak expressed a desire to create small units for single people or those who do not own a car. She noted that the proposed project at 1300 El Camino Real pushed the edge of development size, and she expressed concern regarding the development of multiple projects of similar size. She stated there should be variations on building size. She expressed support for transit-oriented development and the reduction of parking requirements. She would like to create open areas. She supports commercial development to provide a tax base.

Councilmember Warden noted that public transportation is almost non-existent. He stated that Ralston Avenue is over capacity, and he does not want to interrupt the flow of traffic. He also

stated that most people have to use their cars to get to work. He noted that the proposed plan creates micro-villages that do not interconnect. He does not support mixed use development, and expressed a desire to limit uses.

Judy King, Belmont resident, noted that the existing Downtown Specific Plan allowed for a pedestrian path over Ralston Avenue to avoid the construction of a mid-block crosswalk.

Councilmember Braunstein stated that the proposed plan needs better coordination between each area. He cited the need to determine how the services and amenities will be used by all housing types located in the area. There is no unified vision. He expressed a desire for a village feel rather than multiple high rises. He expressed support for mixed use. He is concerned about the lack of public transportation, and he recognizes the need for density in order to make development financially feasible. He expressed support for underground parking. He noted that public gathering spots need to be attractive and usable.

Councilmember Lieberman stated that it might be feasible to add a pedestrian bridge over Ralston Avenue. He expressed a desire to promote walkability and to provide open space. He noted that cities with busy streets have a lot of pedestrian traffic. He commented that Belmont's flat area is dedicated to parking lots. He supports underground parking, and noted there is likely a need for higher density, especially if it results in more open space. There is a need for mixed standards to avoid cumulative high density structures, especially over the course of several properties in a row. He expressed the need to coordinate from one parcel to the next and to provide services for combined visits rather than single trips.

Mayor Feierbach expressed a desire to clean up existing buildings as a start. There is a need to determine the types of businesses to encourage for the downtown. She does not support mixed use, and there is a need for more commercial establishments. She expressed a desire to see what the density would look like at full build-out. She expressed support for no more than three stories, and she would like more open space. She supports housing that is designed for seniors and single people.

Community Development Director de Melo described how to address the linear height issue along multiple parcels. He stated this could be accomplished with articulation in buildings. He noted that improving the existing buildings does not go far enough, and he expressed the importance of modifying building standards.

Discussion ensued.

Councilmember Warden suggested determining what uses the City would not support for the downtown.

Councilmember Wozniak suggested forming an ad hoc committee to address permitted uses. She commented that design can encourage desired residential development.

Community Development Director de Melo stated that staff has discussed this issue with developers who have indicated a need for affordable and senior housing. He stated that Belmont residents who are downsizing want to remain in Belmont.

Council concurred to form an ad hoc committee, the details of which would be discussed at the April 12th Council meeting.

Councilmember Braunstein expressed a need for identifiable architectural style that is not too eclectic. He noted that the type of residential housing that is created has policy implications.

RECESS: 9:00 P.M.

RECONVENE: 9:10 P.M.

Consideration of Revisions to the City Council Protocols

City Clerk Cook noted that the Council Protocols were initially adopted in 1999 and had been revised a number of times since then. She explained that the document was used as a guide for how the City Council governs itself and manages meetings and administrative duties. She stated that staff has proposed a number of modifications, and the City Council may have other areas they wish to address.

Discussion ensued regarding the Item 9 section of the City Council agenda. City Clerk Cook noted that the verbiage for this section indicates that no action is to be taken on Item 9's, but sometimes the Council takes action. City Manager Scoles suggested that if there is action to be taken, the agenda item title can so indicate.

Discussion ensued regarding how City Council members can add items to the agenda.

Interim City Attorney Kane stated that she interprets the Protocols to define this as solely through the Item 9 process. She also recommended clarifying language for the City Manager's authority on adding items to the agenda.

Discussion ensued regarding how other cities manage this process. City Clerk Cook noted that the Item 9 process is unique to Belmont, and in some cities, individual Council members do not have the ability to introduce topics for consideration.

Councilmember Wozniak recommended that City Councilmembers be required to use the Item 9 memo. Councilmember Braunstein stated that there is often a need to discuss a potential Item 9 topic with staff before adding it to the agenda. He expressed concern that the existing regulations prohibit any staff work in advance of discussion of adding an Item 9 to the agenda.

Council concurred to require the use of the Item 9 memo, and that minimal staff time to discuss a potential Item 9 matter is permissible.

Discussion ensued regarding enhancing the verbiage describing the Mayor's duties. Council

concurred to add more details to this section to capture current practices.

Discussion ensued regarding staff presentations. Councilmember Wozniak noted that the Protocols provide for ten minutes, but that presentations are often too long. City Manager Scoles stated that this is a guideline only. Council concurred to leave the verbiage as written.

Council concurred to remove the verbiage that requires public speakers to state their name. City Clerk Cook noted that there is no legal requirement for speakers to identify themselves.

Discussion ensued regarding email. City Clerk Cook stated that she will remove the verbiage that indicated that the City Clerk would forward email received by the City Council to the appropriate staff member, since she no longer receives those emails. City Manager Scoles encouraged Councilmembers to forward emails to him if response is needed from staff.

Discussion ensued regarding the donation of time by public speakers. City Clerk Cook clarified that this practice was a problem in prior years, which led to the prohibition as outlined in the Protocols. Council concurred to leave the prohibition in place.

Discussion ensued regarding the process for reconsidering actions previously taken (motion for reconsideration). Council concurred to include verbiage to provide for the ability to use this motion at future meetings, not just the current meeting.

In response to Councilmember Braunstein, City Clerk Cook clarified that tie votes result in no action.

In response to Councilmember Wozniak, Interim City Attorney Kane indicated that official City stationery should be used by a Councilmember only if the comments represent the position of the full City Council. Councilmember Warden recommended that Councilmembers create their own City stationery. Interim City Attorney Kane indicated she would investigate whether or not Councilmembers are allowed use the official City logo or seal on personal stationery.

Councilmember Wozniak recommended that the Mayor be provided with additional salary above what is provided to Councilmembers. Councilmember Warden noted that although there may be a need for additional expenses for the Mayor, he supports the existing salary structure. Councilmember Lieberman stated that it is an honor to be Mayor and the existing salary is adequate. Councilmember Braunstein expressed support for the existing salary.

Council concurred to consider increasing the expenses for Mayor at budget time.

Discussion ensued regarding time allocation for project appellants. Councilmember Wozniak expressed concern regarding the time restriction as it applied to the recent Koret Field appeal. City Clerk Cook noted that it is unusual to have multiple appellants, and suggested that in the future, potential appellants could be advised of the restriction prior to filing an appeal. She also noted that the Koret Field appellants could have requested additional time as set forth in the

existing Protocols.

Council concurred to add verbiage that if the appellant is given additional time, the project applicant, if not the appellant, would also be given additional time.

Councilmember Warden suggested that the rotation of Mayor and Vice Mayor occur at the first December meeting in non-election years. City Clerk Cook explained that in years past, certification of the election often occurred by the end of November, but because of various new regulations, it takes longer to certify due to the need to count provisional ballots.

Council concurred to move the reorganization meeting in non-election years to the first December meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the restrictions on how the City Manager can bring forward policy issues to the City Council. Council concurred to leave the restrictions in place which outline the same provisions as City Council Item 9's insofar as the expenditure of minimal staff time.

Councilmember Braunstein stated that he previously discussed the matter of mid-term review and evaluation of commissioners with former City Attorney Zafferano. He stated that Mr. Zafferano had advised of the inability to be able to do this. Councilmember Braunstein also suggested outlining details on the approach to the commission interview process. He expressed a desire to ensure the success of all commissioners.

Discussion ensued regarding the commission evaluation process.

Mayor Feierbach recommended that if any Councilmember has an issue with an individual commissioner, the Chair of the commission could be contacted.

Interim City Attorney Kane suggested that Councilmember Braunstein discuss this matter further with her.

Discussion ensued regarding teleconferencing by Councilmembers. Interim City Attorney Kane outlined the provisions for teleconferencing described in the Government Code.

Councilmember Warden noted that teleconferencing is not mandatory. He questioned whether or not it should be prohibited, and he explained that some cities do not allow teleconferencing. City Clerk Cook stated that there may be a need for teleconferencing due to quorum or split vote issues.

Council concurred to continue to allow teleconferencing and to add the Government Code regulations within the Protocols.

Councilmember Lieberman stated that he would be unlikely to teleconference in to a meeting if there were only routine items to be considered. He expressed a desire to not make it difficult to

teleconference if there is a need. He noted that if the public decides it is happening too often, the councilmember will not be re-elected. He explained that he attempts to coordinate his travel around Council meetings.

MEETING EXTENSION, at this time, being 10:30 P.M., on a motion by Councilmember Wozniak, seconded by Councilmember Braunstein, the meeting was extended for 30 minutes by a show of hands (4-1, Warden no).

Councilmember Lieberman recommended eliminating the 15-minute restriction for the public comment section at the beginning of the meeting. City Clerk Cook noted that there are two opportunities at the meeting for public comments on items not on the agenda. She cautioned that if there are no restrictions on cumulative time at the beginning of the meeting, those who are in attendance for items on the agenda might have to wait to be heard.

Councilmember Warden expressed concern that there could be an instance of a large number of people who wish to speak on something not on the agenda, which could take up the entire meeting time.

Council concurred to leave the cumulative time of 15 minutes for the initial public comment period.

City Manger Scoles noted that the Protocols provided that items removed from the Consent agenda for separate consideration should be discussed before the next item on the agenda. He noted that this has not always been the practice. Councilmember Wozniak stated that there have been times when items removed from Consent were held to the end of the meeting.

Council concurred to remove the verbiage. City Clerk Cook noted that comments may be made on Consent Agenda items without removing them from the agenda.

City Clerk Cook stated that a revised draft of the Protocols would be presented for approval at a subsequent meeting.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 10:40 P.M.

Terri Cook
City Clerk

Meeting Tape Recorded and Videotaped
Audio Recording 786